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State Fish and Game Officials Present 2007 Sport Fishing Awards This Weekend *New state records set for four saltwater species*

BOSTON – Anglers who reeled in the biggest fish of 2007 from Massachusetts lakes, ponds, streams and coastal waters – including four new saltwater record holders – will be honored by state fisheries officials at this weekend's Eastern Fishing & Outdoor Exposition in Worcester.

Massachusetts Fish and Game Commissioner Mary Griffin will join with Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MassWildlife) Director Wayne MacCallum to present the annual Freshwater Sportfish Awards at a 4 p.m. ceremony tomorrow (Feb. 9), and with Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) Director Paul Diodati to recognize winners of the 2007 Saltwater Fishing Derby on Sunday (Feb. 10) at 1:30 p.m. Both ceremonies take place at Worcester's DCU Center.

"The annual Freshwater Sportfish Awards Program and the Saltwater Fishing Derby highlight the vast fishing opportunities the Commonwealth has to offer anglers of all ages," said Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) Secretary Ian Bowles, whose secretariat includes the Department of Fish and Game, which contains both divisions.

"I would like to thank everyone who participated in the 2007 fishing competitions and urge others to get involved this year," Commissioner Griffin said. "I offer my congratulations to the winning fishermen for their prize catches and angling skill."

Among the dozens of fish enthusiasts to be honored tomorrow is Roy Leyva of Plymouth, who was named MassWildlife's Angler of the Year – an award that recognizes the sportsman or woman who weighs in the largest number of species that qualify under the Freshwater Sportfishing Awards Program. Leyva landed 13 different species in bodies of water throughout eastern and central Massachusetts, from Hoxie Pond in Sandwich and the North River in Pembroke to Plugs Pond in Haverhill and the Wachusett Reservoir.

MassWildlife's Freshwater Sport Fishing Awards program presents bronze pins to adult and youth anglers who catch fish of certain minimum weight requirements for 22 species, and gold pins and commemorative plaques to those who catch the largest fish in each category. The heaviest fish landed during 2007 included Leyva's 21-pound broodstock salmon caught in Brewster's Cliff Pond, a 19-pound 6-ounce lake trout caught at the Quabbin Reservoir by Belchertown's Stephen Utley, a 29-pound 4-ounce carp pulled from the Connecticut River in Holyoke by Edward Pratt of Florence, and a 25-pound 1-ounce northern pike reeled in by Todd Matera of Palmer at Holland Pond in Holland.

In the Youth category (age 17 and under), Sean Ryan Jr. of Lowell caught a 29-pound carp in the Merrimack River in Lowell, while Natick's Tony DiRuscio caught a 16-pound 8-ounce northern pike in Webster Lake in Webster. (A full list of all 23 adult and 19 youth Gold Pin winners is attached).

On the saltwater side, fish caught in state-controlled marine waters and/or first landed in a Massachusetts port during 2007 included four new state records. Aaron Costa of Fall River caught an 8-pound 15-ounce black sea bass on May 12, Jonathan Pilcher of Falmouth boated a 48-pound 10-ounce dolphin (mahi-mahi) on August 2, John Behm of Marshfield hooked a 455-pound porbeagle shark on August 12, and Bill Manthorne of Windham, NH caught a 189-pound big eye tuna on August 25.

In all, the Saltwater Fishing Derby drew 261 entries from 12 states, and 44 anglers will be awarded trophies. (A full list of Saltwater Fishing Derby winners is attached).

The DMF will also present two Skillful Skipper awards to boat captains who had at least three derby-winning fish caught aboard their vessels last year. Named 2007 Skillful Skippers were Captain Jim Walsh of the "American Classic" from Lynn, and Captain Dave Niemi who pilots the "Captain John and Son" out of Plymouth.

To qualify for the freshwater award program, fish must be weighed in on a state- or town-certified scale. Saltwater entries must be caught by hook and line and weighed in at DMF-certified weigh stations.

MassWildlife, DMF, and the Massachusetts Environmental Police plan to host exhibits at this weekend's Eastern Fishing & Outdoor Exposition at Worcester's DCU Center (www.sportshows.com).

Lists of Award Winners are available at the two links below.



winners list for
paper.xls

http://www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/recreation/fishing/awards/2007_sportfish_winners.htm